Country summary: Cyprus

# COVID-19 cases

Cyprus has recorded 1,207 cases of COVID-19, with 19 deaths[[1]](#footnote-1). Data was not disaggregated by disability.

Other than two persons who tested positive for the virus in mid-April, there were no other reports about COVID-19 incidents in institutional settings. No deaths were reported in residential care homes[[2]](#footnote-2).

# Emergency, lockdown, and confinement

Cyprus did not declare a state of emergency.

With few exceptions, all services supporting the rights of persons with disability to independent living were suspended without measures taken to inform or provide support[[3]](#footnote-3).

Following the complaints of organisations of persons with autism, the restriction measures were modified to include a special permit for persons with autism to leave home with a medical certificate confirming their condition[[4]](#footnote-4). Moreover, persons with disabilities have been allowed to move in order to access medical treatment[[5]](#footnote-5), and Supermarkets and Pharmacies were required to be open from 6am to 10am exclusively for people over 60 years old and persons with disabilities[[6]](#footnote-6).

It is worth noting that on June 10, 2020 the Council of Ministers decided to abolish special arrangements that were previously applicable to persons with disabilities, regardless of the steady increase in overall COVID-19 cases[[7]](#footnote-7).

# Involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities

The Government did not hold consultations with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

The Cyprus confederation of Disability Organisations addressed an open letter to the President of the Republic, to:

* Complain about the exclusion of persons with disabilities from provisions taken to fight the pandemic. The confederation highlighted the higher risk for persons with disabilities, calling for adoption of special, distinct and targeted measures.
* Ensure that paid leave would be granted to those persons with disabilities refraining from working because of health problems and to ensure that persons with disabilities were consulted in all decisions affecting them[[8]](#footnote-8).

Nevertheless, no organisations of persons with disabilities were consulted in the process of designing the aforementioned measures.

# Communications and announcements

The government acted on accessibility of communications in mid-April 2020, in the form of three videos in sign language explaining protection measures, the symptoms of COVID-19 and what people should do to protect themselves[[9]](#footnote-9). Only three documents have been converted in easy-to-read format, containing general information on COVID-19 and on the easing of measures after 14 May 2020[[10]](#footnote-10). The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) pointed out gaps in the steps that have been taken to ensure accessible information for people with disabilities about the COVID-19 pandemic[[11]](#footnote-11). In fact, inaccessibility of communications for persons with intellectual disabilities resulted in discrimination against the same, as no information was provided in a format accessible to them[[12]](#footnote-12).

# Institutions and closed settings

No data was collected on institutions and closed settings, seemingly no deaths were reported.

# Health care

No data or information reported on health services.

# Social Protection

The Confederation of Organisations for Persons with Disabilities reported a significant deterioration in access to welfare for persons with disabilities. The most affected by these changes were persons with intellectual disabilities.

The Confederation reported that during lockdown the Social Welfare Services searched the files of persons with disabilities who were public benefit receivers and receivers of the Minimum Guaranteed Income, in order to identify cases where the Minimum Guaranteed Income could be terminated. The result was the unlawful termination of the Minimum Guaranteed income for persons with disabilities and their families without any explanation or warning, including pensioners with disabilities who were classified as ‘willingly unemployed’, persons with disabilities whose child was in paid employment for a short period of time in 2019 or persons with disabilities who allegedly changed address without informing the authorities[[13]](#footnote-13).

# Other comments

On employment:

* Many persons with disabilities work at the so called ‘front line’ servicing the public and facing an increased risk of contracting the virus and falling severely ill because of pre-existing aggravating health issues[[14]](#footnote-14).
* No protective measures were adopted in transport persons with disabilities to and from their place of work, despite the pressure put on them to continue working at the front line without any protective measures[[15]](#footnote-15).

1. Information updated to 27 August, <https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/pdf/i682020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman), September 2020, available at: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/7EE18391CBE8E56CC2258542002907CB/$file/AYT_9_2020.pdf?OpenElement> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications, Bulletin 2, 28 May 2020, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-may-1> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications, Bulletin 2, 28 May 2020, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-may-1> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus outbreak in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications, Cyprus country report, 24 March 2020, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/cyprus-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications , Bulletin 1, 8 April 2020, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-april-1> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/press/10062020_1.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications, Bulletin 2, 28 May 2020, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-may-1> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Available, in Greek, at: <https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/videono.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Available, in Greek, at:  <https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/infoeasy.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Available, in Greek, at: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/All/7EE18391CBE8E56CC2258542002907CB/$file/AYT_9_2020.pdf?OpenElement> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications, Bulletin 2, 28 May 2020, available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-may-1 ;](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-may-1) Demetriou, M.(2020), Πλήρης αδιαφορία για μετανάστες στην Κύπρο εν μέσω κρίσης του κορωνοϊού, 24Hours, 5 April 2020; Perdios, T. (2020), Επέβαλαν πρόστιμο 300 ευρώ σε άτομο με νοητική αναπηρία!, Dialogos, 31 March 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus outbreak in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications, Cyprus country report, 24 March 2020, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/cyprus-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Through a special legislation standing from 1988 (L. 17/1988), blind persons find employment as telephonists in the public sector and most are placed in public hospitals. Since 2010 a quota has been in place for persons with different types of disabilities in the public sector too, which offered employment to persons with disabilities in the public sector, often in positions serving the public. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU, Fundamental Rights Implications, Bulletin 2, 28 May 2020, available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-may-1> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)